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cases. The Juvenile Protective Society of Chicago does not cover the areas of Negro residence. Movements like the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Brotherhood Republic—character builders of youth—indifferently touch the lives of Negro youths.

When the seriousness of Negro cases reaches the point of demanding institutional care, other difficulties appear. In most northern communities colored and white children are accepted by the same institutions. Usually the proportion of Negroes is smaller, both in proportion to the Negro population and in proportion to the cases of Negroes requiring institutional care. For Negro feeble-minded there is little care in the North and practically none in the South. The superintendent of one northern institution for the care of feeble-minded expressed a view that many Negro children thought to be feeble-minded were not really so, but only appeared so by comparison with white standards! How far this misapprehension, undoubtedly shared by others, has operated to affect the volume of present Negro feeble-minded in institutions, it is impossible to say.

Commenting on the alarming inade-

quacies throughout the country, and especially in the South, Hastings H. Hart, Director of the Department of Child-Helping of the Russell Sage Foundation, says:

This is a matter of great moment because the neglected feeble-minded colored children swell the ranks of paupers, criminals and vicious persons, and also spread social disease. It appears to me extremely important that the southern people should become aware of the fact that in neglecting the colored children they are hazarding the interest of the white population almost as much as that of the Negro population.

Appeals for participation by Negroes in social service programs have been directed on the basis of experiments demonstrating that where Negro children are provided with the same prophylactics their health, crime, illiteracy and dependency rates are reduced to proportions comparable with those of white children. The crux of the problem, however, is the unyielding bloc of public disinterest and opposition which holds fast to traditional restraints, both economic and sentimental, and which makes the Negro's struggle for existence more severe.

Helping the Farmer Through His Children

\$100,000,000 Worth of Children on the Farm

By OWEN R. LOVEJOY, LL.D.
General Secretary, National Child Labor Committee

THE National Child Labor Committee's interest in the country child is no new thing, and yet we still find people to whom it is a shock to discover that farmwork may be considered child labor. For in the minds of many people those words, "child labor," still call up only the pathetic image of a haggard and wizened child

of seven years, or it may be ten or twelve, dragging an enormous dinner pail into a factory at dawn. And it is true that for years the plight of the factory child, or at least the child engaged in those pursuits commonly classified as industrial, has been emphasized almost to the exclusion of all other children. But this does not necessarily in-

dicate that no other children deserve our whole-hearted attention. In fact, it merely indicates that in attacking an enormous problem we have taken one step at a time, for our aim from the very beginning has been to reach every child in America, if necessary.

When the National Child Labor Committee was organized in 1904, the country was just awaking to conditions in our cotton mills; the great coal strike of 1902 had called attention to the numbers of child workers in Pennsylvania coal-breakers; the Consumers' League had recently opened its fight against tenement homework, and the first investigators were going into the fish and vegetable canneries where women and children were working interminable hours. So it was very natural that our first work should be in the interest of these children in industry, of whom the public knew a little. Indeed, it seemed obvious that whatever our ultimate aim, our immediate task must be to collect authoritative information on what the public knew only in the smallest part, so as to turn their interest into real knowledge, and that knowledge into action.

It has been a long, hard fight, so long and so arduous that it appears to be a sad commentary on American civilization; but there is no need of going into details now. The fact is that it is at last established in this country that children under fourteen years of age shall not be employed in factories, canneries or workshops, or children under sixteen in mines or quarries; that no children shall be employed for more than eight hours a day, or at night. In making that statement, however, we do not mean to imply that no children *are* working under such conditions in this country today, for we all know the vast difference between law and its absolute enforcement. But we do mean to say that the principle, at least,

is established, and that its establishment has allowed us to go on to the next step. For there is still a long way to go on the road of real protection and development for American children.

These minimum standards for industrial workers mean nothing if they are not backed up by good school regulations, health protection, recreational facilities, continuation and vocational schools, and so on. And we are not even sure that the minimum standards themselves are adequate. Many of us, indeed, are sure that they are inadequate and that for the health and well-being of the nation we should keep all children in school and out of industry until they are sixteen at least. But, however that may be, the fact remains that such standards are now established, but that in taking account of stock we find there are thousands of American children at work who are in no way affected by them, American child wage earners of whom America is shamefully ignorant and careless.

NUMBER OF CHILD AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

One child out of every eight in America, from the ages of ten to fifteen, who is in work not usually called industrial, is engaged in work not regulated by any state or federal statute. And at least 70 per cent of these children are doing some sort of agricultural labor. The census of 1910 lists 259,813 children between ten and fifteen years of age as "farm laborers working out" and 1,157,323 children between ten and fifteen years of age as "farm laborers on the home farm."¹

We are not making any such ridiculous statement, however, as that all

¹ These figures were collected in the month of April. Figures for 1920 (not yet published) were collected in January and will consequently show an apparent decrease, due to the fact that most farmwork is not in progress in January.

farmwork done by children is harmful, or that all these children listed in the census are in need of protection. But we are stating most emphatically that too many of these thousands of rural child workers are being deprived of the very fundamentals of a normal childhood; that some of them are actually exploited, even as factory and cannery children have been exploited; and that it is high time we all turned our attention to them, especially if we are as interested as we say we are in raising the standards of American rural life.

For if there is one thing more than another that we have learned in the seventeen years since the National Child Labor Committee was created, it is that child labor is not limited to any one industry or process, or by locality, but that any work which is positively harmful to the child or even negatively harmful, in that it hinders or prevents the child's normal development, is child labor and as such is bad for the child and through him, bad for the community and the nation. That the "child is father of the man" is no idle platitude when one views the inefficiency, ill-health, dependency and general inability to cope with life that follow hard on the heels of a neglected childhood.

And this is the view we believe should be most emphasized in approaching the rural child labor problem. For every agricultural study we have made points to the same conclusion: that the farm child is frequently getting too much work, too little schooling and too little developmental care; that he is too often a mere drudge who will grow up an ignorant, inefficient worker, more a liability than an asset to his community.

STUDIES IN VARIOUS STATES

In 1910 we first investigated the working conditions of the children in

the cranberry bogs of New Jersey, and those among the itinerant berry and produce pickers of Delaware and Maryland. In 1913 we made our first study of the cotton pickers of Texas and found little children working too long hours, living in unsanitary conditions, being kept out of school for the sake of cotton. In 1915 we looked into the situation in the sugar-beet fields of Colorado, and since then we have made intensive studies of various agricultural industries and districts in Oklahoma, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia, California and elsewhere.

In Colorado we found that 5,000 children between six and fifteen years of age were working regularly in the cultivation of sugar-beets, even during school hours. One family, whose seven and eleven year old children both worked in the beet fields, regardless of school, boasted that these children made \$10,000 a year in sugar-beets. Another man said, "My boy is worth \$1,000 for work in the beet season, but he is nothing but an expense when he is in school." The school authorities estimated that each of these 5,000 children missed from two to twenty-two weeks of school a year, an average of nine and one-half weeks each, because of work in the beet fields.

In Oklahoma, where we found children as young as five picking cotton regularly, the average daily attendance at school was only 57.2 per cent of the enrollment, and a study of 174 schools, involving 6,389 pupils, showed that the number of days absent during the year was more than one-third of the total number of days present. The absences of these children for farmwork or housework reached a total of 90,903 days, an amount almost equal to the sum of all other absences, such as those due to illness, indifference, bad weather or distance from school, put together.

In North Dakota the school authorities state that only 30 per cent of the children complete the eighth grade in school, and only 4 per cent, the twelfth grade, while at least 20,000 farm children stay out of school each year for a period of sixty days to help in raising wheat and other small grains.

These are only isolated instances cited to indicate what conditions are throughout the country. Helen V. Bary, of the Federal Children's Bureau, in a recent summary of child labor conditions, outlines the situation as follows:

Undoubtedly the most serious problem of child labor today is that of agricultural work. The evil of the situation is not only positive, but negative—not only the conditions it creates but the conditions it denies. *Rural child labor in vast areas of the United States today carries with it a virtual denial of education.*

CHILD LABOR AND ILLITERACY

Another investigator establishes the following parallel between child labor and illiteracy:

It is well known that the percentage of illiteracy in the country is twice that of cities, one in every ten of the rural population being classed as illiterate. It is not so widely advertised, however, that of the sixteen states having a percentage of illiteracy greater than that of the United States as a whole, fifteen have a foreign population percentage far below 14.7 (that of the United States as a whole), the highest per cent in those states being 8.6, and the average 2.9. And even less advertised is the fact that these fifteen states include all but one of the thirteen states (all southern agricultural states) which have a child labor percentage in excess of the average for the United States as a whole. The parallel is striking and the conclusion obvious. If rural sections, in spite of a small foreign population, have a very large percentage of illiteracy, it is apparent that country children are not being educated; and when we

find that in these same regions there is a large amount of child labor which interferes seriously with school attendance, it is reasonable to conclude that the work of the children is responsible, in part at least, for the lack of schooling. It cannot be attributed entirely to the inferiority of rural education, for even the poorest "little red schoolhouse" can train the child to write—the test of literacy.²

But it is not merely schooling of which the farm-working child is deprived. Anyone who knows rural conditions can tell you that he has the minimum amount of play and recreational facilities, of sanitary living conditions, of health protection and of all these developmental elements that are the very essence of a real childhood—if he has any of them at all. For the poorer the farmer, the more he needs the labor of his children, and the less he can afford decent surroundings or those things which he, perhaps, considers unnecessary but which go a long way toward making life livable and progressive for his family.

In our recent study of rural life in Tennessee, Charles E. Gibbons summarizes some of the differences between the lives of owner-farmers and tenant farmers in that state, and gives an excellent idea of the deprivations which are an everyday fact to the poor farmer's child.

The most striking point in the evidence presented is the wide difference in conditions surrounding the lives of owners' children and tenants' children. Owners have nearly three times as large an income as tenants, although the families are practically the same size. Owner children are not kept out of school to work on the farm as tenant children are. Tenants move about much more; hence they do not have the comforts and conveniences in their homes that they might have if their tenure were longer. Because of the system, tenants are

² *Farm Labor vs. School Attendance*, by Gertrude Folks.

forced to borrow at high interest rates and are thus restricted in the manner in which they may purchase their supplies and dispose of their crops. They get a good deal less from the farm for their tables than owners do. Their water supply is less protected. Fewer of their homes have screens and toilets. Their opportunities for recreation are more limited. They read less because they have less to read. The opportunity that tenants' children have for education, health, recreation and the enjoyment of a normal childhood, is limited. The evidence shows that many of the economic factors which enter into conditions surrounding their lives are below a minimum standard for decent living. This ought not to be for any group of people. According to the 1910 census, tenants comprise a little more than 41 per cent of the rural population of Tennessee. Hence, the problem of giving tenant children their inherent rights is serious, not only because of the extremely bad conditions under which they are living, but also because of the large number involved. These children ought to have a better chance.³

What is true of the tenant farmer in Tennessee is true of the poor farmer everywhere. Our report of child welfare in West Virginia, now in press, the result of six months' careful study by trained investigators, is an appalling record of deprivations and positive dangers surrounding the farm children in that state—a record which goes a long way to prove one point we have been hammering at for many years, namely that child labor is never an isolated evil, but is by its very nature inextricably bound up not only with other problems of child welfare but with problems of adult welfare. The same conditions that produce child labor are those that produce poor, unsanitary homes, inadequate, unattended schools, poor recreational facilities, few books, few papers—in short, the meagre, bleak life that deadens

and discourages. Child labor is a part of that meagre life; it is, alas, in the last analysis, only a partial cause of it, for here we run up against that old, old circle of ignorance, inefficiency, poverty, child labor, lack of education, and so on.

THE SCHOOL AND THE RURAL CHILD PROBLEM

By the same token, therefore, child labor is not a negative problem. If you are going to the root of the matter, it is not enough to say of a child, "He must not work." You must go further than that if you are going to create anything more than a deadlock. You must take a positive stand, and when you remove a child from the drudgery of labor, you must give him, in place of it, its substitutes: suitable schooling, suitable play and suitable work. When you do that, you are not merely cognizant of the present, but you are building on a sure foundation for the future.

This, then, is our problem in relation to the neglected rural child; this is our way of going to the root of the evil, an evil so closely interwoven with the whole problem of bettering rural life today that we of the National Child Labor Committee believe that, in reclaiming a fair chance for country children, we are actually working shoulder to shoulder with every agency and every individual who has at heart the welfare of the American farmer. What can do more for rural development than the creation of a better, more efficient rural population? And what can do more to produce that better population than the protection, education and development of country children?

The farmer's greatest loss today is the loss of his children. They will not stay on the farms if farms to them mean drudgery. They would rather go to town and work eight hours a day in

³ *Child Welfare in Tennessee*, N.C.L.C. 1920, p. 373.

a factory, with a motion-picture house handy for their evening hours, than stay on the farm and work from sun-up to sun-down, with nothing ahead of them for the evening but supper and an early bedtime. If they do stay on the farm inheriting the precarious, hand-to-mouth existence of their fathers, and learning no better ways of farming, their children begin staying out of school to pick cotton or cultivate beets or tobacco, and the thing goes on and on.

But consider what so simple an expedient as a good rural school with *all the children in it for all the term* could do for a community of people of this class, a really progressive rural school that would teach something applicable to the lives of the children, a school with recreational facilities in use, a school where health and sanitation and nutrition are not merely words in the speller. The children coming out of that school would begin to take a progressive interest in farming. The country would not be such a bad place to them; in fact, they would be glad to stay there, for every country child no matter how much he feels the lure of the city feels also the lure of the woods and the fields and the wide, open spaces, if they are not connected too closely in his mind with hard, unrewarded labor. The children coming out of that school would see to it that their houses were decent to live in. They would demand books and papers and would see that their children went to school. They would be the kind of farmers that are interested in improved methods, in better ways of marketing—in short, the kind of farmers we want. Can you imagine a surer way of raising the standards of a rural population than through a really effective, rural school?

THE ECONOMIC INTERPRETATION

But, we are told, all this sounds very well but it is not practical. This is an

economic problem, and the farmer works his children and keeps them out of school because he has to do so in order to scrape a bare living. Until you pay him a decent price for his products, he must continue to employ his children, utterly regardless of all this high-sounding talk of education. Very well. We are ready to admit that there is an economic interpretation of the problem, and we are as anxious as anyone to find the solution of the economic puzzle.

It is true that this argument that child labor is "necessary" has been offered in relation to every industry we have ever touched, and we have yet to see it proved. It is true, also, that we have never been willing to believe that any industry or any condition that exists at the expense of childhood has a right to exist in a supposedly civilized age. But, setting these things aside for the moment, we are so interested in the economic aspects of the question and so sure that our plan has a real economic significance, that we are quite ready to talk to the farmer in wholly practical terms about it; to interpret it for him, if he wants, in dollars and cents.

It is perfectly true that to the hard-pressed farmer his children have an actual cash value. The Colorado man who said that his boy was worth \$1,000 in the beet season but was nothing but an expense in school, is not alone in this utilitarian view. The southern tenant farmer frankly admits that he tills a certain number of acres in direct proportion to the number of children he has to help him cultivate and harvest them. To the poor farmer anywhere, his children must mean either so many mouths to feed or so many hands on the farm, and you can scarcely blame him for it. But suppose you can show him that school has a greater practical value than work; suppose you can show him

that a child in school now means just so much more return to him later. Will he not then, at least, take an interest in the school proposition? It is merely hard common-sense in any industry, farming as well as any other, to say that a healthier, better educated, more efficient workman is sure to mean a higher value of production either in quantity or quality. The farmer knows enough to look to the future when he spends money on fertilizer that he may get a larger crop, or when he spends money on the right feed that he may raise better hogs and cattle. Why should he not be made to see, then, that it will be dollars in his pocket in the long run to spend a little on the education and care of his children? Is not that practical?

Other people are offering the farmers a \$100,000,000 fund for better marketing of their products and we are glad of it. Everything that helps the farmers' bank account helps our cause. But we believe we are working to an equally practical end, and that our proposition, if we may so call it, is also essentially a \$100,000,000 fund, or more, for the farmers' welfare. Think of it in these terms. There are at least a million American farm children today who are out of school doing work in the fields. At the very lowest estimate each of these children will be worth \$100 more to his parents if allowed to get his full share of school and good health than he can be at present. Is not that \$100,000,000 straight into the pockets of the American farmer?

It is something we cannot legislate, although such things as enforcing school laws, increasing rural school appropriations, paying rural school teachers decent wages, and so on, are all matters direct enough to be put immediately into the hands of the lawmakers. But the greatest gain will be

in educating the farmer himself, in teaching him the value of these things which he now classifies as secondary, making him see that the full development of human resources—children—is essential to the success of any human enterprise. If you cannot speak to him on the higher, spiritual side, speak to him, we say, on the practical side.

All this cannot be done, however, without first knowing the farmer, the intricacies of his problem, knowing conditions as he sees them, knowing the wherefore of everything he does, and no one realizes this fact better than the National Child Labor Committee. Every attack we have made upon child neglect or exploitation has meant first getting the facts, and that is our present business in relation to the rural child problem.⁴

Our new Chairman, David Franklin Houston, who was Secretary of Agriculture in the last administration, has long been a devoted student of rural life. We have on our Board of Trustees such an authority on rural conditions as Professor E. C. Lindeman of the American Country Life Association. We have special agents who are experts on rural problems as well as on all phases of child welfare, and we are ready to go into the facts thoroughly and scientifically.

We are equipped and ready to do a big job. Are not these million or more almost forgotten country children sufficient justification? What an opportunity we have, all together, to make the statement that children are the nation's greatest asset, something more than a high-sounding platitude! And if we really believe this statement, if we are actually a nation that believes in children, here is our chance. Will the American people take it?

⁴See study of Child Welfare in West Virginia, made during the winter and spring of 1920-21 and now in press.